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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

TUESDAY, JULY 31, 2007

In Today's Papers

Novak Article Draws Interest in Turkey
Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and others cover the July 30 Robert Novak piece, "Bush's Turkish Gamble," in which the Washington Post columnist claims US officials are working with their Turkish counterparts on a joint military operation to suppress PKK militants and capture their leaders in northern Iraq, which would avert a Turkish invasion of its neighbor. The Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak says on page one that following a statement from Deputy Assistant Secretary Matt Bryza that the US would move against the PKK, Undersecretary of Defense Eric Edelman briefed Congress on a joint operation plan. Hurriyet claims the plan was leaked to the press by those "who don't want it to happen." Papers quote the US Embassy in Ankara and the Pentagon as saying that the US "recognizes that the PKK is a serious problem for Turkey," and that the US is "working closely with the Turkish and Iraqi governments to solve the problem."

Editorial Commentary on Novak Column

Calling the US administration "shameful" columnist Gungor Mengi blasts the US for not doing anything against the PKK. In mainstream daily Vatan he writes: "The US continues to be shameful regarding the PKK. When it comes down to terrorism against itself, the US sees no harm in hitting targets across the ocean. But as far as the PKK is concerned, by its presence in Iraq, the US is a de facto host country for a terrorist organization which is harming its ally. It is now only nostalgia to think of the US as a country of justice and freedom -- neither of them exists any longer. The terrorist murderers are enjoying shelter in Northern Iraq, and they are directly or indirectly supported by American weapons as well as protected by the American and Barzani administrations. The Washington Post article, if true, will only help the White House take the possibility of an operation against the PKK off the agenda because the plan has been unleashed. And Turkish people will remain suspicious about a deliberate leak of this plan to the Washington

Post."

Sami Kohen writes in the mainstream Milliyet: "Given the reliability of Robert Novak as a journalist, his column needs to be taken seriously. It does not really matter whether the plan was leaked by Congressional sources or by Pentagon/White House sources, the fact of the matter is that the US has finally thought of doing something concrete against the PKK following mounting pressure from Ankara. In fact, the US was planning to take action against the PKK but did not move forward until the election process was over. The action plan demonstrates that the US has now taken an inarguably clear stance against the PKK and enhanced its cooperation with Turkey in this regard. By taking a lead on this issue, the Bush administration also prevents a possible unilateral action by Turkey.

Now the question is whether Turkey will be satisfied with a limited operation against the PKK. Turkish military analysts are saying that a limited operation to capture PKK leadership can be useful, but does not mean a complete end to PKK terrorism. At this stage, knowing what Turkish government and military think on this issue is as important as the US plan."

Military Breaks Silence

All papers report the chief of Turkish General Staff (TGS) General Yasar Buyukanit on Monday reiterated at a reception that the military wanted the next president to uphold secular values. "We are still behind what we said," Buyukanit told reporters when asked whether he stood behind his statement on April 12, in which the military chief had maintained that the new president must adhere to the principles of a secular democratic state -- not only in words but in essence. Papers point to the fact that these were the first comments from the Turkish military on the subject since Prime Minister Erdogan's AKP won a landslide victory in July 22 parliamentary elections.

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Meanwhile, the deputy chief of the TGS General Ergin Saygun told reporters that "a legal counselor" from the Pentagon has visited the Turkish General Staff recently to explain that the US did not supply weapons to the PKK. "According to the Pentagon, some US weapons supplied to the Iraqi security forces might have been given to the PKK," said General Saygun.

Official Election Results

All papers and TV channels report that the Supreme Election Board announced the official results of the July 22 general elections. The board said that participation in the elections was 84.25 percent and the votes of 1,602,000 voters were ruled invalid. Based on the election results, AKP will have 341 seats in the parliament, CHP 112 seats, MHP 70 and independents 26 seats. One seat will remain vacant due to the death of MHP deputy Mehmet Cihat Ozonder, and parliament will convene with 549 deputies. The Election Board announced that three parties and independents crossing the threshold resulted in 28.5 per cent of the people going unrepresented - a figure composed of those who voted for other parties and those who did not vote. After the 2002 elections 45 percent of the people were not represented in the resulting parliament.

According to parliamentary regulations, the parliament will convene on Saturday, August 4 and the new members of parliament will be sworn in. The meeting will be chaired by the eldest member of the parliament, CHP deputy Sukru Elekdag. The next move in the parliament will be to elect a new speaker. Mainstream Hurriyet gives the parliamentary time-table and says that the government is expected to read its program in parliament on August 11 and the new government will face a vote of confidence on August 16. On August 16 the parliament will start to accept the applications of the presidential candidates.

Meanwhile, turmoil in the main opposition party CHP continues. Around 50 CHP mayors supporting Istanbul's Sisli district mayor Mustafa Sarigul urged Baykal yesterday to resign from the party chairmanship.

TV Highlights

NTV, 7.00 A.M.

Domestic News

- The Constitutional Court has ruled that government financial aid will be given to parties that are backed by a minimum of 7 percent of the voters or have a minimum of three seats in the parliament.
- Two suspects arrested for raiding a church during a ceremony held to commemorate slain Armenian journalist Hrant Dink have been released by the court.
- The lawyer of independent Kurdish MP Sebahat Tuncel has asked the court to suspend the trial of Tuncel for membership in an outlawed organization.
- Turkish Airlines director Temel Kotil said a possible strike will lead to the contraction of the company.

International News

- British charity Oxfam said in a report hunger and disease are spreading in Iraq as violence masks a deepening humanitarian crisis.
- In his first talks with President Bush since becoming British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown said they are committed to confronting al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and stabilizing Iraq.
- The US announced military aid packages worth more than USD 43

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billion for Egypt, Israel, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states in an effort to bolster Arab allies against Iran and others.

- The European Commission has signed a contract worth Euro 4 million with the UN Development Program in order to complete the de-mining of the buffer zone in Cyprus.

WILSON